MASSACHUSETTS PROBATION SYSTEM

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THE MASSACHUSETTS PROBATION SYSTEM.

[The following is taken, almost word for word, from notes furnished by Miss Hannah M. Todd and Mr. Daniel M. Hammond, assistant probation officers to the Municipal Court of the city of Boston.]

An act of May 28, 1891,* provides that the justices of each municipal, police, or district court shall appoint one person to perform the duties of probation officer under the jurisdiction of the court.

Five † assistant officers may be appointed for the Municipal Court for the city of Boston. One of these assistants may be a woman.‡

The work of the probation officers of Massachusetts has two distinct branches,— probation proper and work in connection with the law of July, 1891,§ prescribing the punishment for drunkenness.

The probation system proper is sufficiently described in the following account of probation for women, except that the visitation there described is more thorough than has as yet been customary in other jurisdictions.

Probation for Women in the Municipal Court of Boston.

The law providing for appointment of a woman as assistant probation officer was passed in May, 1892.‖

The duties are defined as being to investigate the cases of all women against whom a charge is brought in the court, and

* Acts 1891, chap. 356. † Acts 1892, chap. 242. ‡ Acts 1892, chap. 276.
§ Acts 1891, chap. 427. ‖ Acts 1892, chap. 276.

to perform such other duties as may be required of her by the justice of the court.

The work falls under two heads,—investigation and probation.

Investigation.

All women arrested in Boston are taken to the *House of Detention.* The matron sends every morning to the woman probation officer a list of these women, with the offence of each.

Taking this list, a visit is made to the cell of each woman, and careful, kindly inquiries made as to the cause of her arrest, learning as much as possible of her environments, associations, capacity for work, and the tendencies of her life.

In many cases the investigation goes no further at the time, but in those which seem hopeful cases for reform, or where it seems possible they might be influenced to a better life through any agencies at command, outside inquiries are made, the arresting officer being seen and any interested friends. For this purpose a *continuance* is asked, which the judge is always willing to grant.

If the information thus gathered shows the case to be in any degree hopeful, the information is given to the judge with a recommendation for probation ; but, on the other hand, if it is found not to be a case for probation, the investigation assists the judge to form his decision as to the sentence to be imposed. A daily report in cases of drunkenness is prepared by the probation officer for the judge each morning, giving the record of each woman coming before the court charged with the offence of drunkenness.

Probation.

If the woman is put on probation, the term is five weeks. During this term the probationer is visited as often as once a week, if possible. The intention is that a real friendly over-

sight shall be kept, and assistance rendered in strengthening the will and purpose of the offender, and to give those inclined to do better the opportunity to do so under some sort of moral restraint either at their own homes or at work which may be secured for them, or in a private institution under certain conditions imposed by the court, and so to avert the necessity for sending them to a correctional institution.

At the end of the term the probation is continued, or the person is sentenced, or the case is dismissed. The court hears the report of the probation officer before deciding the case.

Report is made every month to the Commissioners of Prisons of Massachusetts of the cases placed in the care of the probation officer, showing the result in cases taken on probation in previous months and in cases of special interest.

A card catalogue is kept of all women placed in the care of the probation officer, each card giving a history of the family, the visits of the probation officer, and a record of the information gathered from time to time regarding the case.

Another card catalogue is used in keeping the records of all arrested women seen by the probation officer (practically all the women that are arrested), and the information gathered from time to time concerning them. A reference card is kept for each *alias*.

There have been 209 women placed on probation in the ten months from June 13, 1892, to April 13, 1893.

OFFENCES.

Drunkenness	140
Larceny	32
Night-walking	17
Idle and disorderly	12
Assault and battery	3
Stubborn child	3
Other offences	2
	209

TREATMENT.

Placed in "Homes"	68
Sent away from the city either to relatives or to places for work	26
Allowed to go to their own homes or to their work in the city	115
	209

Those who remain in the city are visited by the probation officer as often as once a week when practicable.

FINAL DISPOSITION.

Dismissed by court	160
Sentenced	34
Remaining in charge of the probation officer	15
	209

"*Drunk-law.*"

The work of the probation officers under the "Drunk-law" of July, 1891, consists of investigation, recording, and reporting to the police and to the court.

Every person arrested for drunkenness is given an opportunity to make a statement that he has not been arrested for drunkenness twice before in the preceding twelve months.

If the officer in charge of the station-house where the prisoner is believes the statement, he may, in his discretion, release the prisoner. If, however, he thinks the statement is not true, the prisoner is brought up for trial.

In either case the statement is forwarded to the probation officer, and investigated by the assistant probation officer, who reports as to the probable truth or falsity of the prisoner's statement. The paper is then handed into the court, and is filed by the clerk of the court among the papers of the case. The probation officer also makes a report to the officer who made the arrest.

If the prisoner resides in some town outside of the district of the probation officer reporting to the court in which the

case is tried, the case is investigated by the probation officer whose district includes the town of residence.

A record of each case is kept in the probation office.

Reports from Records.

The probation officer learns every morning the names of the different prisoners coming before the court that morning for drunkenness, and sends in a report upon their cases. Also the probation office sends to any arresting officer that desires it the previous record of any case.

The ages and offences of persons taken on probation in 1892 are shown in graphic form on the following chart: —

AGES AND OFFENCES OF PERSONS TAKEN ON PROBATION DURING THE YEAR ENDING SEPT. 30, 1892.

Offences.	Ages.																			
	Under 10 years.	10 to 12 years.	13 years.	14 years.	15 years.	16 years.	17 years.	18 years.	19 years.	20 years.	21 years.	22 years.	23 years.	24 years.	25 years.	26 to 30 years.	31 to 40 years.	41 to 50 years.	Over 50 years.	Unknown.	Total.
Assault,	1	13	6	11	3	8	14	6	13	1	11	9	8	11	10	50	76	26	11	4	292
Drunkenness,	–	–	–	–	2	8	16	39	63	59	101	120	145	139	123	626	1,220	665	400	27	3,753
Larceny,	21	46	19	24	18	28	17	18	15	8	10	11	5	4	3	24	26	15	2	1	315
Other offences,	17	80	39	56	55	52	42	48	36	15	17	17	19	16	13	92	123	64	28	8	837
Total,	39	139	64	91	78	96	89	111	127	83	139	157	177	170	149	792	1,445	770	441	40	5,197